

Illinois State University Police Department
Emergency Response Procedure

Workplace violence

Workplace violence can be generally defined as acts of violence, or threats of violence, directed towards persons while on duty or at the workplace. Workplace violence can come from strangers, clients/customers, co-workers, or domestic violence spillover into the workplace.

There is no one formula for determining if workplace violence will occur. While there is no specific way to determine if workplace violence will occur, there are general traits employees may exhibit to be indicative of potential for violence.

- Obsessive involvement with one's own employment to the exclusion of all else
- Obsessive-compulsive disorder
- Unwarranted sense of entitlement
- Romantic or sexual obsessions
- Obsession with, and access to weapons or paramilitary training
- Obsession with WV acts being justified
- Beware of recently acquired traits
- Sudden withdrawal from usual friends
- Inability to concentrate
- Decrease in productivity
- Decline in personal hygiene
- Attendance problems
- Threats to others or property
- Violent reaction to discipline
- Discussion of or stalking of others
- Any indication of suicide
- Extreme feelings of desperation, extreme marital problems, financial distress, etc.

In addition to general traits someone may exhibit, and of the following warning signs may also indicate a potential for violence.

- Irrational beliefs and ideas
- Threatening or intimidating
- Fascination with weapons
- Fascination with acts of violence
- Plans to hurt self or others
- Externalizing blame
- Unreciprocated romantic obsessions
- "Special project" employee
- Fear reaction among employees

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- Drastic change in beliefs
- Displays of unwarranted anger
- New or increased sources of stress.
- Inability to take criticism
- Feelings of being victimized
- Intoxication at work
- Expressions of hopelessness
- Heightened anxiety
- Productivity/attendance problems
- Violence towards inanimate objects

If you see someone who is in crisis and you feel in danger you should immediately flee from the area and contact the University Police. If you can not escape for a potentially dangerous situation the following crisis management techniques may be helpful. As in all crisis situations there is no one way to deal with every crisis and good judgment and common sense should be applied. The following suggestions may be of assistance.

- Project calmness; move and speak slowly, quietly, and confidently
- Be an empathetic listener
- Focus your attention on the other person and let them know you are interested in what they say.
- Maintain a relaxed yet attentive posture
- Position yourself at right angles to the person. Be sure you have an exit.
- Acknowledge the person's feelings; tell them you can see they are upset.
- Ask for small, manageable, specific favors
- Establish ground rules if unreasonable behavior persists
- Be reassuring and point out choices. Break large problems into smaller manageable tasks.
- Accept criticism in a positive way. If the criticism seems unwarranted ask them to clarify
- Ask for their recommendations and repeat back to them what they are asking.
- Avoid physical contact, finger pointing, or "locked eyes"
- Watch your non-verbal communications
- Avoid sudden threatening movements
- Stay out of their personal zone
- Avoid minimizing the situation
- Avoid a lot of technical or complicated information when emotions are high.
- Avoid making promises you can not keep.
- Avoid taking sides or agreeing with distortions

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If you suspect someone may pose a threat to the safety and security of the campus it is your obligation to report this to competent authority. In cases where there appears to be a potential for violence you should notify your immediate supervisor or the University Police. **If for any reason you feel threatened by someone else, you should flee the area and immediately contact the University Police by dialing 911 or utilizing a campus emergency phone.**

If you are confronted with a weapon (firearm, knife, or other weapon) you should attempt to flee from the area to a place of safety. Once you are safe you should contact the university police immediately.

If you can not flee from the area and are confronted with weapons in the workplace please keep the following in mind.

- Stay calm
- Avoid rushing the person
- Focus on the person, not the gun
- Negotiate
- Step back
- Buy time